

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE  
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**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**  
*March 6, 2003, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic*

As part of our effort to deepen bilateral trade relations between our countries, we have been holding meetings under our United States-Dominican Republic Trade and Investment Council (TIC). We held the first meeting in Washington last October and another today here in the Dominican Republic.

Our discussions covered a range of multilateral, regional and bilateral issues that are currently the focus of our trade relationship. The United States has taken note of the positive direction that President Mejia is actively working to take Dominican trade policy.

The Dominican government informed the United States of the constructive actions it has taken in recent months to foster agreement on important issues in the WTO and to advance the market access process in the FTAA. The United States expressed appreciation for these efforts and also recognized the Dominican government's work to resolve pending bilateral issues. Our meeting today revealed substantial progress in those areas, and we will intensify these efforts.

The Dominican Republic reiterated its interest in pursuing a free trade agreement with the United States. The United States recognizes the significant trade and historical relationship that the United States enjoys with the Dominican Republic and has an abiding interest in further deepening that relationship. The United States also appreciates the efforts demonstrated by the Dominican Republic toward building a solid record of cooperation with the United States on important trade issues.

In that light, the United States expressed its willingness to consider options, such as docking the Dominican Republic to the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), at the appropriate time. We agreed to use the TIC process to keep one another informed of progress in all areas under discussion. Further, the United States agreed to expand our dialogue under the TIC to keep the Dominican government up to date on developments in the CAFTA negotiations.

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